~~Book~~ Review: Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future

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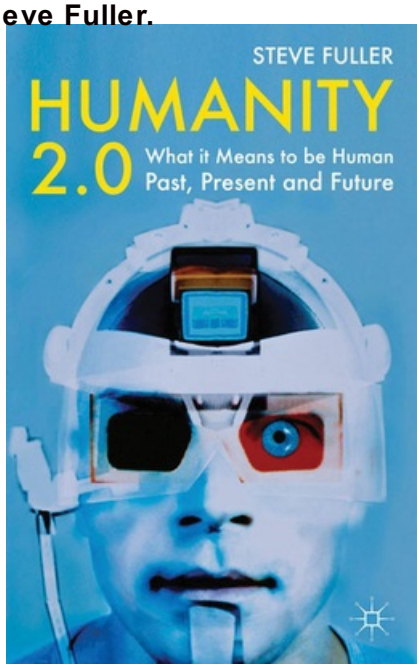
Social thinkers in all fields are faced with one unavoidable question: what does it mean to be 'human' in the 21st century? As definitions between what is 'animal' and what is 'human' break down, and as emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and nano- and bio-technologies develop, accepted notions of humanity are rapidly evolving. ***Francis Remedios*** *finds that although* ***Humanity 2.0*** *offers challenging ideas, readers who work through those ideas will be rewarded.*

Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future. Steve Fuller. Palgrave Macmillan.



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As biotechnology, genetic engineering and synthetic biology are changing humanity, what does it mean to be human? What is the distinctiveness of humanity? Given humanity is the locus of the social sciences, this book focusses on the changing boundary conditions of biology (race) and ideology (religion) for humanity. With the welfare state set as the location of the battle between biology and ideology on humanity, Fuller defends the distinctiveness of humanity.

The author first diagnoses the problem of humanity as a bipolar disorder between our animal nature (biology) and our search for transcendence of nature (ideology). Are we closer to animals as indicated by Darwinism or are we closer to God as indicated by Christianity? In today's terms, the positions can be portrayed to be between the poles of Peter Singer's animal liberation or Ray Kurzweil's spiritual machines.

For Fuller, humanity, which is moral, is the central project of the social sciences. Humanity consists of socially organised resistance to the natural selection and natural forces through collective projects such as Christianity, the University and the State. Participation in large-scale projects allows humans to control or even reverse the effects of natural selection. For Fuller, the classical sociologists Durkheim, Marx, and Weber all concur with his characterisation of the project of humanity. Essential to Fuller's concept is the redistribution of wealth through the state. Fuller recognises Foucault's notion that the human sciences as a body of knowledge was created in the 19th century and by the 20th century, man has died – human sciences as a body of knowledge are in question. Fuller connects humanity to transhumanism, which is the view that humanity can be enhanced or redesigned through technology. With converging technologies such as biotechnology, nanotechnology and computer technology, humanity can be transformed to an enhanced version of humanity – humanity 2.0. For Fuller, humanity 2.0 is an emerging object of social science and social policy. Fuller has indicated the core principle of social science is humanity, and he has extended it to the possible future of transhumanism. In my view, whether transhumanism occurs is difficult to say because even with converging technologies, it is not a linear progression from humanity to transhumanism.

How did the project of humanity start? Fuller avers that John Duns Scotus started the project of humanity with a univocal theory which predicates God's attributes to man, while Thomas Aquinas has an equivocal or analogical theory of predication of God's attributes to man. Fuller's view is that for Scotus, man's difference to God's attributes is by *degree*, while for Aquinas, man's difference to God is by *kind*. Humanity is created in the image and likeness of God. For scientists, Bacon, Newton and Mendel, who are Christians, doing science is participating in the mind of God. With the advance of the nanosciences, biotechnology and genetic engineering with which the future of life can be engineered, there have been many voices which claim science is playing God. From Fuller's perspective, 'doing' science, particularly the nanosciences, biotechnology and genetic engineering, is to participate in God's mind. However, this reviewer is sceptical. It would be very difficult to convince the public of this because many of the public take Aquinas' view that humanity and God are different in kind and it is God who created life. The public fears that engineering of life may have the potential to do more harm than good.

Fuller takes on Darwninism with intelligent design theory (ID). For Fuller, ID is the view of the role of divine design in western science. In 2005, Fuller was an expert witness to defend ID to be taught in schools at the Kitzmiller vs. Dover trial. The judge disagreed that ID is science since it is based in theology. In a controversial move, Fuller recommends the promotion of an Abrahamic theological perspective to motivate students to become scientists in the United States because of Abrahamic theology's view that humans are privileged to understand and control nature as they are in created in the image and likeness of God. Many critics will disagree that Fuller needs this controversial move since many scientists in the West are not motivated by Abrahamic theology and scientists in countries such as China or India are not brought up as Christians.

As humanity 2.0 will push against boundaries of morality, Fuller links theodicy to humanity 2.0. Theodicy is the problem of evil in a world created by God. Fuller's answer to alleviating suffering, which occurs with natural disasters or human deeds, is to suffer smart. He recommends moral entrepreneurship, which is to recycle evil into good through an agent who did evil deeds but has decided to do good. Fuller's examples of moral entrepreneurs are Jeffrey Sachs, George Soros and Robert McNamara. McNamara, who was US Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam war, later became the President of the World Bank. He lent money to the Third World to reduce poverty. His lending policies to the Third World had a negative impact because many poor countries were unable to repay their loans and there was corruption in some governments who were recipients of loan money.

Humanity 2.0 can be considered a milestone in Fuller's work since it forms the locus of his discussions in his other works on the foundations of the social sciences. It is a complex book brimming with ideas on what it means to be human. As Fuller's social epistemology is concerned with social transformation of knowledge, the exploration of the changing boundary conditions of the knower is critical. With the enhancement of humanity through biotechnology, genetic engineering and synthetic biology, the knower's identity and social epistemic role can change. With advancement of computer technology and digital technology, avatars can be created and the identity of knower and social epistemic role is extended through avatars. The interface between the knower and the world has changed because the knower can be changed either through human enhancement or avatars. Those who are interested in the foundation of the social sciences and its intersection with biology, theology and transhumanism would benefit from reading this book. I recommend this book since it goes beyond traditional issues of social science to include discussions of biology, theology, transhumanism and the history of sociology in the UK such as the founding of the first chair of sociology at the London School of Economics in 1907. Though the book offers challenging ideas, readers who work through those ideas will be rewarded.

Francis Remedios is a Canadian independent scholar with his PhD from Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven. His research areas are social epistemology, philosophy of science and philosophy of the social sciences. His 2003 book, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge*, was on Steve Fuller's social epistemology. He has published several articles and book reviews on social epistemology and he is a member of the editorial board of the journal Social Epistemology and the Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective. Read more reviews by Francis.